

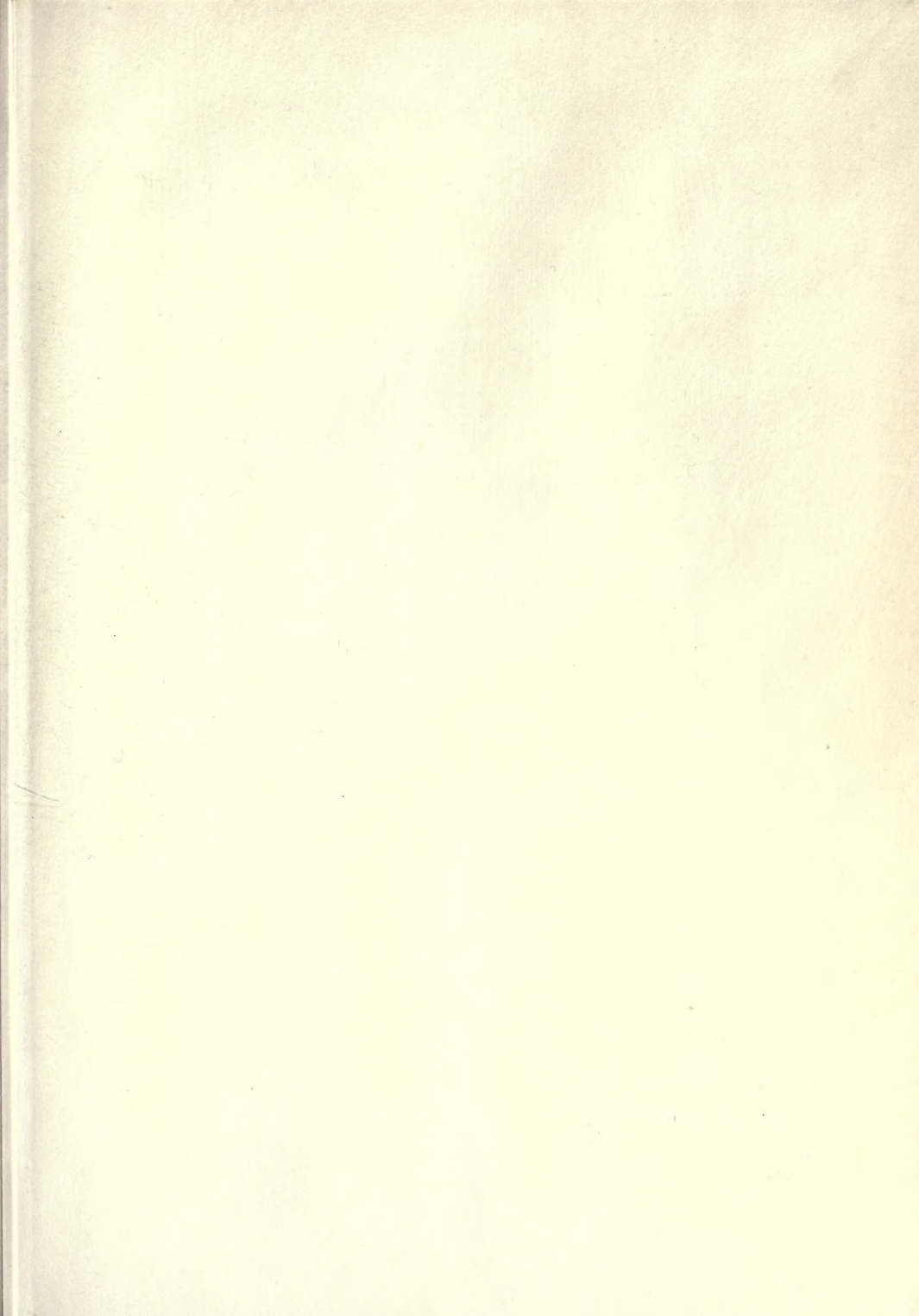
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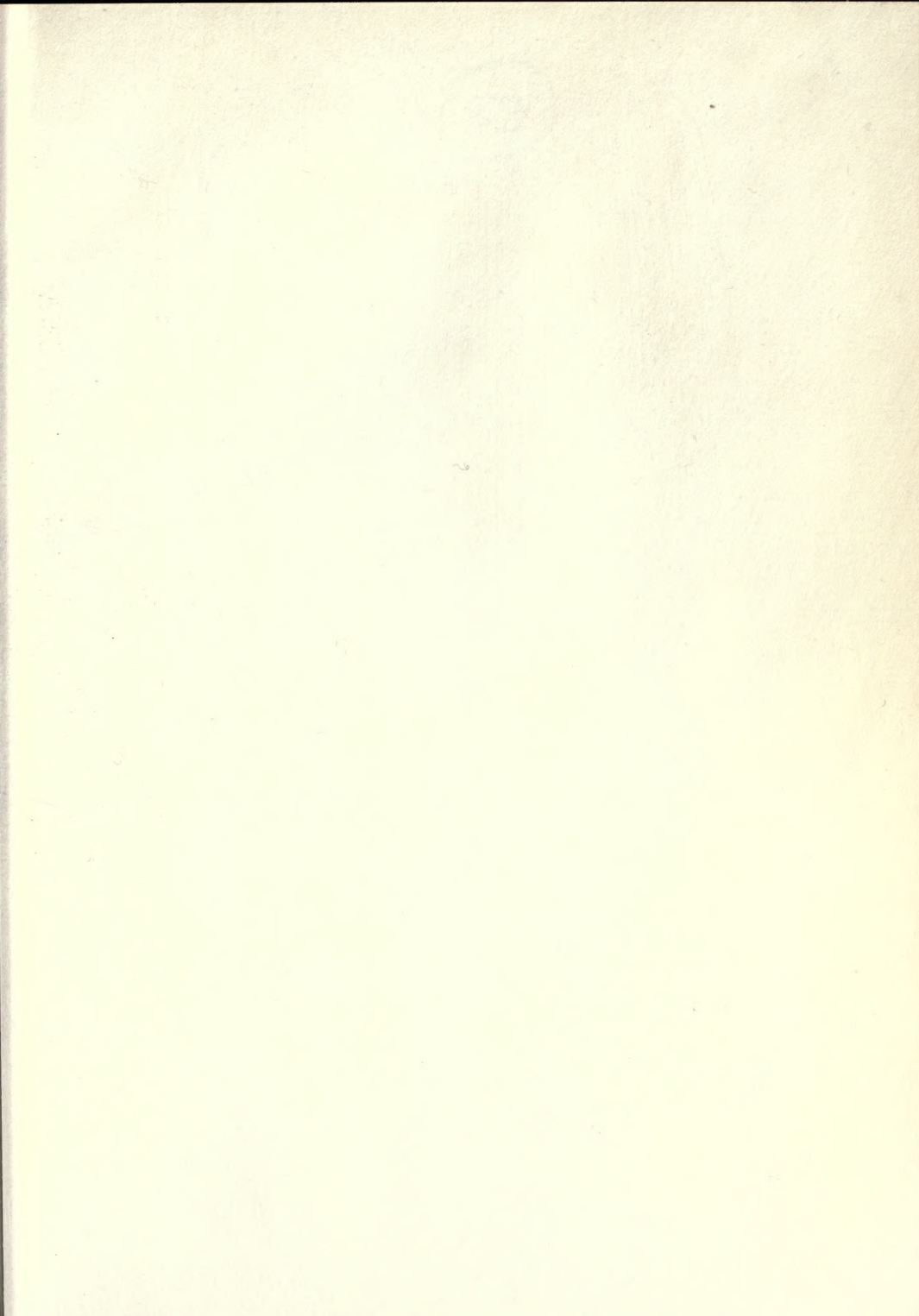


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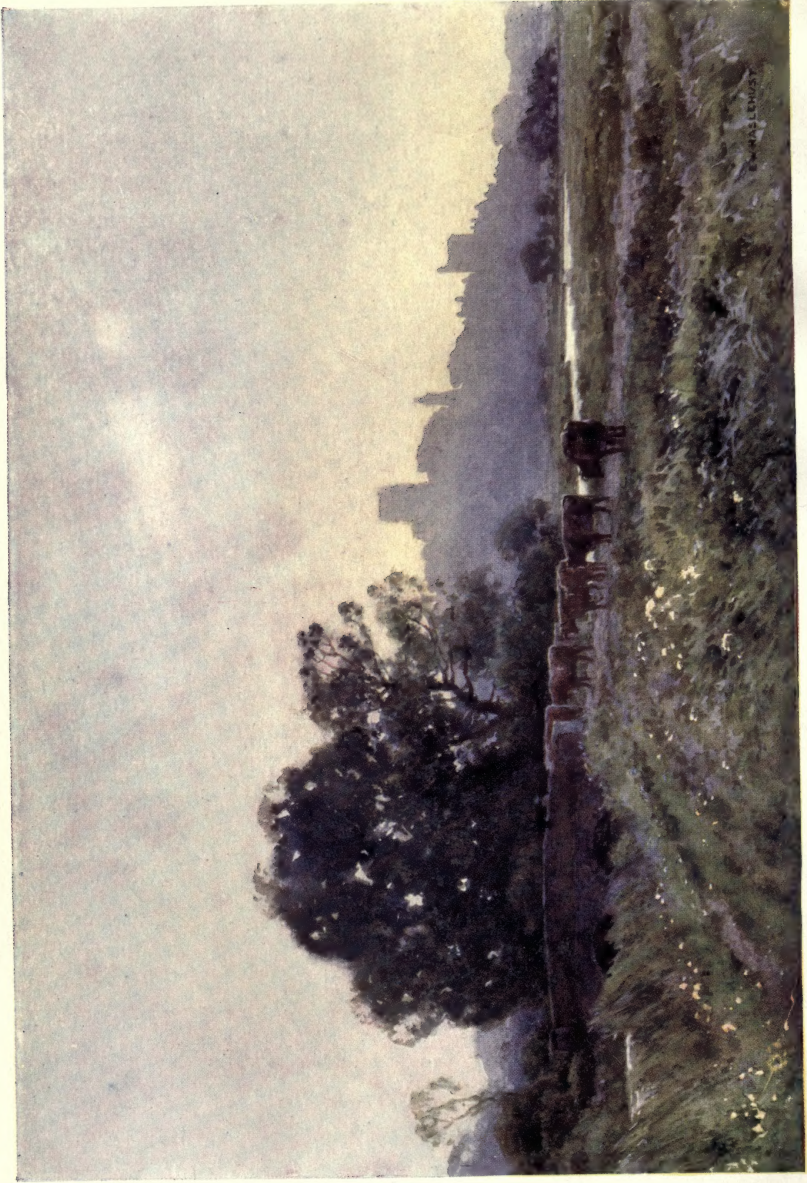




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DORCHESTER FROM THE MEADOWS

THE HEART OF WESSEX

Described by **SIDNEY HEATH**

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DORCHESTER AND THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

As all the world is beginning to realize, that portion of the country immortalized by Thomas Hardy, in his great romances of rural life, lies in one of the most delectable regions of south-west England; and although, for the purpose of giving variety to his scenic backgrounds, Mr. Hardy has occasionally gone far beyond the narrow boundaries of his home county, yet for general purposes his Wessex is synonymous with the county of Dorset. Historically considered the Wessex of the novels is but partially conterminous with that wherein, after centuries of bloodshed, our Saxon ancestors established their Octarchy, and the novelist has explained his reasons for the adoption of the name "Wessex", which did not appear in any of the novels until the publication, in

1874, of *Far from the Madding Crowd*. "The series of novels I projected," he writes, "being mainly of the kind called local, they seemed to require a territorial definition of some sort to lend unity to their scene. Finding that the area of a single county did not afford a canvas large enough for the purpose, and that there were objections to an invented name, I disinterred the old one. The press and the public were kind enough to welcome the fanciful plan, and willingly joined me in the anachronism of imagining a Wessex population living under Queen Victoria, a modern Wessex of railways," &c.

As Professor Windle says: "Whilst peopling these scenes with the creatures of his imagination, Mr. Hardy has achieved a feat which he was probably far from contemplating when he first commenced his series of novels. For incidentally he has resuscitated, one may even say re-created, the old half-forgotten kingdom of Wessex."

Although there is scarcely any portion of the county that does not figure in one or other of Mr. Hardy's novels or poems, yet by far the greater number of scenes lie in the portion called South Dorset, around and below an imaginary line drawn from a little to the west of Dorchester to Poole Harbour, and it is mainly with this portion of the Hardy country that it is proposed to deal in this volume.

Like all the true beauty spots of England, increasing familiarity with these south-country landscapes deepens their ineffaceable impression as it multiplies their alluring charms; and, small as is the geographical extent of this strip of rural England, it yet fills our thoughts as it delights our eyes; and it is large enough to attract us by a thousand threads of history and romance, by a hundred beauties of rolling downs and grassy vales, and of steep chalk cliffs where the blue waters of the Channel break with a splutter of spray.

For miles one can wander amid such scenes in this fair Wessex land, where the roses of dawn fade into the infinite azure of a cloudless sky, and the cool salt breath of the sea-borne air is an elixir of life. Moreover, these soft sea breezes, that temper the dazzling heat of the summer sun, waft in their train an unfading wreath of memories of that antique civilization which existed long before the prows of the Roman galleys clove the ethereal mists that fringe the Dorsetian seas.

Mr. Hardy is unique among English novelists in that he writes of ecclesiastical and domestic architecture with the eye and the knowledge of a trained architect, and one who took high honours in this profession before he abandoned it for literature. To this no doubt are due the descriptions he has given

us of the homes and haunts of his heroes and heroines. Occasionally we find that a house of the novels has been made up of two or more neighbouring dwellings, at other times there is some slight transposition of site or locality; but to all intents and purposes Mr. Hardy's Wessex of romance is the Dorset of reality, with regard both to its natural scenery and to the buildings that accompany it. Thus it is that the novelist's architectonic settings, and his literal descriptions of natural scenery, make identification a simple task, and lend interest to numerous old houses and cottages, just as they have immortalized a thousand scenes of their author's native land.

A few of Mr. Hardy's critics have cavilled at the insistence of the architect's point of view, just as some of his readers fail to perceive the genius that lies behind his detailed treatment of buildings; but there is little doubt that the novelist's artistic use of technical material has endowed his romances with a personal note of deep interest, and an architectural one of great value.

Although Dorset has a host of literary associations other than those furnished by the Wessex novels, and notwithstanding that William Barnes sang of its charms to deaf ears as sweetly as ever Burns piped of the North Country, it was left to Thomas Hardy to reveal Dorset to those who knew it not;



HANGMAN'S COTTAGE, DORCHESTER

although he was writing for a great many years before his novels began to draw people to the land of Gabriel Oak, Tess, and Ethelberta.

As the tourist must have a centre, a starting-off place for his various excursions, the visitor to the Hardy country cannot do better than make his headquarters at Dorchester, the Durnovaria of the Romans and the "Casterbridge" of the novels.

Alighting at either of the railway stations, for the town is well served by both the Great Western and the South Western Companies, the visitor who has learned that Dorchester occupies the site of an important town of the Romans will probably receive a shock at the prevailing note of modernity that confronts him on every side. It is only when one begins to understand the planning of the streets, and has visited the town's outlying earthworks of Maumbury and Poundbury, that the mind can realize the possibility of a Roman town being buried a few feet beneath the houses that line the narrow thoroughfares. It has been said that one cannot plant a shrub in a Dorchester garden without unearthing some link with the legions of imperial Rome, an excusable exaggeration if we think of the vast number of treasures that have been discovered wherever the layer of surface soil has been penetrated; and there is every reason to believe that the foundations of Roman

Dorchester lie just below the gardens, houses, and pavements of the bright and modern town.

Excavation in the scientific sense the town has happily been spared, but the accidental finds are of great value, as proving that the town's historic past recedes into that twilight of dreamland and myth which veils the infancy of our island in a golden haze of mystery. All around this capital of Dorset lies a storied land, wherein memories of the Durotriges, of the Roman legions, and of the ruthless march of the Saxon through the beautiful land of Britain jostle with modern associations of poetry, literature, and art.

Proceeding along South Street, as the narrow thoroughfare that connects the stations with the centre of the town is called, the first building to claim attention is the Grammar School, founded in the sixteenth century by a Thomas Hardy, and rebuilt in the same style in 1879. Adjoining the school is "Napper's Mite", a small seventeenth-century almshouse with a picturesque open gallery and a clock bracket, copied from the one that adorns the old George Inn at Glastonbury. The almshouse clock came from the old workhouse near by when it was pulled down. Farther along the street, but on the opposite side, is the Antelope Hotel, a Jacobean building whose beauties are concealed behind nine-

teenth-century walls, although some interior panelling and carving remain *in situ*.

Just beyond the hotel the street joins the main thoroughfare of the town, and at this intersection, where four roadways diverge towards the cardinal points of the compass, historical memories and literary associations clamour for recognition. The curious stone obelisk in the centre of the near roadway, and for many years used as the Town Pump, marks the site of the old Octagon, and was erected in 1784, which date is carved in characteristic Georgian figures on the coping stone. It also marks the site of two houses that stood close together with their upper rooms built over the street.

Facing us are the Town Hall and St. Peter's Church, the latter of which is conjectured by some authorities to stand on the site of a Roman temple. It is a stately Perpendicular building with an imposing tower and a remarkable set of gargoyles. The Transition-Norman door-arch of the south porch is a survival of an older church that once occupied the same spot. Outside the church is Roscoe Mullins's lifeless-looking bronze statue of William Barnes, the Dorset poet, who, until his death in 1886, was the near neighbour and literary friend of Thomas Hardy. The pedestal of Barnes's monument bears the following verse from his poem, *Culver Dell and the Squire*:—

“Zoo now I hope this kindly feäce
Is gone to vind a better pleäce;
But still wi’ vo’k a-left behind,
He’ll always be a-kept in mind.”

Within the sacred edifice are several interesting monuments, including two cross-legged effigies of the “cmail” period, but neither of these is *in situ*. In the porch of this church John White, one of the four founders of Salem and the virtual founder of Massachusetts, lies buried.

Opposite the eastern end of the church is the Corn Exchange, where the fickle Bathsheba displayed her sample bags of corn to the astonished farmers, “adopting the professional pour into the hand, holding up the grains in her narrow palm for inspection in perfect Casterbridge manner”. It was in a neighbouring shop that this “Queen of the Corn Market” purchased the fatal valentine that aroused the amatory instincts of Farmer Boldwood; while it was but a short distance away that, a little later in the story, *Far from the Madding Crowd*, Bathsheba and her husband, Sergeant Troy, met the piteous figure of Fanny Robin on her painful journey to the Casterbridge workhouse. By way of Mellstock (Stinsford) and Durnover (Fordington), Boldwood came to Casterbridge, where, turning into Bull-Stake Square, he “halted before an archway of heavy stonework which

was closed by an iron-studded pair of doors", and gave himself up for the murder of Troy. Here also came Gabriel Oak in search of the licence which was to procure for Bathsheba "the most private, secret, plainest wedding that it is possible to have".

In the *Mayor of Casterbridge* the town naturally figures largely, although the opening scenes of the novel are laid at Weydon Priors (Weyhill, Hants). In Casterbridge Susan Henchard and Elizabeth-Jane sought for Henchard

"What an old-fashioned place it seems to be!" exclaimed Elizabeth-Jane, "it is huddled all together; and it is shut in by a square wall of trees like a plot of garden ground with a box-edging."

It is in this novel that its author gives us, in a few masterly touches, the architectural details of the town's houses, the "brick-nogging" and the "tile roofs patched with slate"; and indicates the everyday life of its inhabitants. The whole town, in fact, teems with Hardy scenes and characters, and particularly with the story of the Man of Character who was its Mayor. To Casterbridge came Stephen Smith when he commenced that study of architecture which led to his meeting the blue-eyed Elfrida. Bob Loveday, brother to the Trumpet-Major, came hither to meet his Matilda; and in the courthouse Raye sat when

on the Western Circuit, after he had parted with Anna at Melchester (Salisbury).

Walking down High East Street the most unobservant eye could not fail to notice the beautiful distant view of the Frome Valley and the Yellowham Woods, and to note the number of the hostels on either side of the short length of street. Prominent among them is the King's Arms, with a spacious and noble Georgian window projecting over the main portico. This window, that is at once the delight and the despair of the modern architect, gave light to the room wherein was held "the great public dinner of the gentle-people and such like leading folk—wi' the Mayor in the chair".

Just below this still fashionable hotel is the "Three Mariners" with its "four-centred Tudor arch over the entrance". The original inn has vanished, but the present one occupies its site. On the opposite side of the way stands the "Phoenix", but risen again from her ashes since it was the scene of Jenny's last dance in one of the *Wessex Poems*:—

"'T was Christmas and the Phœnix Inn
Was lit by tapers tall,
For thirty of the trooper men
Had vowed to give a ball,
As "Theirs" had done (fame handed down)
When lying in the self-same town,
Ere Buonaparte's fall".



PUDDLETOWN



At the end of the street, and standing a little way back from the roadway, is the White Hart, once a famous coaching inn, and one which, although somewhat modernized, still carries its emblem, a large white hart, above the main entrance. To this hostelry came Sergeant Troy after appearing at Greenhill Fair as the Great Cosmopolitan Equestrian who played the part of "Dick Turpin" at the circus; and here, too, the carrier Burthen conveyed the story-tellers, the "Crusted Characters". This inn is also mentioned in connection with Gertrude Lodge of *The Withered Arm*.

Although the glories of its coaching days are but memories of the past, and notwithstanding that the motorists pass so unpretentious a building for the more attractive-looking King's Arms, the despised of the modern traveller has retained a portion of its old-time custom and prosperity, by reason of its being the inn at which the carriers' carts deposit their morning and take up their evening passengers. The loading of a "tranter's" cart with men, women, and children, not to mention the immense packages of millinery, garden produce, and poultry, is a fine art that could have been evolved only by centuries of experience. To watch one of these caravans from the heart of Dorset disgorge its contents reminds one of nothing so much as the conjuror's hat at our first "grown-up" Christmas party. How so many

human beings can be squeezed into the few cubic feet left over from the merchandise is a mystery, the knowledge of which would make the fortune of an enterprising omnibus company. When meeting one of these Noah's Arks in the country one would think at first sight that it contained men only, although the incessant chattering that proceeds from the cavernous depths of the vehicle has a distinctly feminine note. The reason for this is that the "gaffers" occupy the front seats, where they smoke, make sarcastic and distinctly personal remarks to their stay-at-home neighbours, who gaze with envious eyes from their doorsteps, and keep a keen eye on the various crops that grow along the sides of the route. No matter what the weather, and whatever the season of the year, the men sit over the horse's tail, the gloomy interior of the vehicle, being allotted to the women and children, garden produce, and occasional live stock. The return journey affords the travellers no relief, for the "imports" of the morning journey have merely been exchanged for "exports", and so the tired but happy parties return to their secluded village homes, carrying with them a pungent odour in which beer, oranges, and pepper mints are curiously mingled. All readers of Mr. Hardy's novels will remember Tranter Dewy in *Under the Greenwood Tree*.

At the Swan Bridge, which crosses the Frome just

below the White Hart, we can leave the busy thoroughfare and proceed along a pleasant and shady walk that lines the bank of the stream. On our left is the town, with the gardens of the houses coming down to the water's edge; and on our right the green luscious meadows, watered by many streams, stretch away until lost to sight in the distance. Very cool and refreshing are these paths by the rippling brooks that flow around this side of the town. Everyone loves running water, and there is a strange fascination about gurgling streams and swirling brooks that is difficult to define. Our ancestors built their towns and directed their roads by the waterways, and for reasons other than those attached primarily to defence or commerce. Masses of brambles and sedges sway over deep crystal pools, the haunt of the trout, and the peculiar reflected light from the water enhances the visionary loveliness of the glade.

At the end of this walk is the Hangman's Cottage, a small brick building with a roof-covering of thatch. There is nothing in its present appearance to suggest the abode of the public hangman and the town scavenger. The upper floor was reached originally by an external stone stairway, the holes once occupied by the supporting stanchions still being visible. Within this picturesque little dwelling Gertrude Lodge questioned the hangman when in

search of a remedy for her "Withered Arm". The public executions took place on a roof over the prison gateway, and in the County Museum the visitor will see two leaden weights, each of which is inscribed with the word "Mercy". These gruesome objects were supplied by a tender-hearted governor to shorten the agony of a prisoner of light weight.

From the Hangman's Cottage a delightful walk through the low-lying meadows, towards Charminster, passes by Wolfeton, an historic Tudor house wherein Thomas Trenchard entertained Philip of Austria and Joanna, after their fleet had put into Weymouth Harbour for shelter. It was in the grounds of this house that the Lady Penelope, in *A Group of Noble Dames*, pacified the three suitors for her hand with the roguish remark: "Have patience, have patience, you foolish men! only bide your time quietly, and, in faith, I will marry you all in turn!"—a remark made in jest that was afterwards fulfilled in earnest.

From Wolfeton the return journey can be made by way of the main road that trends in a northerly direction somewhat beyond our present limits—to Maiden Newton (Chalk Newton), the Hintock Country, and the Blackmore Vale (the Vale of Little Dairies), all of which figure in the novels. Nearing Dorchester again one notices that the sidepath is raised a considerable height above the level of the roadway,

being one of many such tree-planted walks that mark the site and extent of the ancient circumvallation of the town, the greater part of which is still *intra muros*.

Proceeding down High West Street, the western counterpart of the thoroughfare we joined at the Corn Exchange and left at the White Hart, we pass on our left the Shire Hall, a reminder, if such were needed, that we are in the county town. Farther on is the Dorset County Museum, within which are exhibited the remarkable relics of Celtic and Roman days that have been discovered in the town and its immediate environs. Nearly opposite the Museum is the house (now a shop) wherein Judge Jeffreys was lodged when he opened his Bloody Assize at Dorchester. The house has retained its little gallery and the greater part of its original woodwork, while several stone-mullioned windows look out on the pretty garden at the back. In Glydepath Road, near the Shire Hall, may be seen the "leering mask" that formed the keystone of the doorway arch of Lucetta's house.

Our American cousins, who make their pilgrimage to the Hardy country in ever-increasing numbers, may be glad to be reminded that it was in the environs of this Dorset Dorchester that John Lothrop Motley, the celebrated historian, made his English

home, he having been born, curiously enough, in the younger Dorchester of Massachusetts. He died, in 1877, at Kingston Russell, the home of his daughter, Lady Vernon Harcourt, and was buried near his wife in Kensal Green Cemetery.

No visitor should leave the town without paying a brief visit to the great earthworks of Maumbury Rings and Poundbury Camp, the former of which is undergoing a series of scientific excavations by Mr. St. George Gray, engaged for the purpose by a joint committee of the Dorset Field Club and the British Archæological Association. Thomas Hardy, whose Dorchester home is but a short distance away, describes Maumbury as "a huge circular enclosure, with a notch at opposite extremities of its diameter, north and south. It was to Casterbridge what the ruined Coliseum is to modern Rome, and was nearly of the same magnitude." It has been estimated that the enclosure could accommodate 13,000 spectators, and over 10,000 are said to have assembled here in 1705, when Mary Channing was strangled and burned, on very slight evidence, for the murder of her husband. Both of these historic earthworks were nearly destroyed in the early days of railway enterprise, and Poundbury was saved only at the last moment by Brunel consenting to tunnel beneath instead of taking his line right through it, as he had at first in-



BERE REGIS

tended. In the Wessex novels and poems it figures as "Square Pummerie", the place where Henchard's "merry-making" occurred.

One of the most delightful of the numerous walks from Dorchester is that which leaves the town by the two bridges near the White Hart, the spot where the local High Street merges imperceptibly into the great London Road. Journeying along this great chalk highway a fine view is obtained of the suburb of Fordington, the "Durnover" of *The Mayor of Casterbridge*.

"Here wheat ricks overhung the old Roman street, and thrust their eaves against the church tower; green-thatched barns, with doorways as high as the gates of Solomon's temple, opened directly upon the main thoroughfare. . . . Here lived burgesses who daily walked the fallow—shepherds in an intramural squeeze."

A mile or so of pleasant, if somewhat dusty, walking brings us to Stinsford crossroads, where a right-hand turn leads to Stinsford House, with its terraced garden, and a very pretty church, the Mellstock Church of *Under the Greenwood Tree*. In this pleasing little church Tranter Dewy and his family attended service, and here the valiant Thomas Leaf listened to the sermons of "His Holiness". It was at Mellstock that Elizabeth-Jane and her mother caught their first glimpse of the town of Casterbridge.

From Stinsford a charming walk through the park

of Kingston House, the Knapwater House of *Desperate Remedies*, brings us to the junction of the roads that lead to Higher and Lower Bockhampton respectively.

We are now near a portion of the "Tess" locality, for a short distance to the right stands Norris Mill, the "Talbothays" of the novel, while the Frome Valley, in which it is situated, is the "Vale of Great Dairies", the "valley in which milk and butter grew to rankness". Here, too, is the western extremity of the far-famed "Egdon Heath", that succession of wild unenclosed moorlands that stretch in unbroken continuity from near Dorchester to Poole Harbour; but a description of this vast heathland must be deferred for the moment, for a short walk leads to Higher Bockhampton, a most charming and secluded hamlet, at the farther end of which is the birthplace of the Wessex novelist, a small thatched house embowered in a world of rural opulence. Mr. Hardy's childhood's days were impregnated with rustic peace and solitude, and the formative influences of his early environment have left their mark on his great romances. From the birthplace a most pleasant ramble over Bockhampton Heath leads into the Yellowham Woods, the "Great Yalbury" wood, in the depths of which Fancy Day resided when living in her father's cottage. Here, too, as told in *Far from the Madding*

Crowd, Joseph Poorgrass had the experience, the re-telling of which always put this most modest of men to the blush.

"Once he had been working late at Yalbury Bottom, and had had a drop of drink, and lost his way as he was coming home along through Yalbury Wood. . . . And as he was coming along in the middle of the night, much afeared, and not able to find his way out nohow, a' cried out, 'Man-a-lost! man-a-lost!' A owl in a tree happened to be crying 'whoo-who-who!' as owls do you know, Shepherd, and Joseph, all in a tremble, said, 'Joseph Poorgrass, of Weatherbury, sir!'" "No, no, now, that's too much," said the timid man . . . "I didn't say *sir* . . . I never said *sir* to the bird, knowing very well that no man of a gentleman's rank would be hollerin' there at that time o' night. 'Joseph Poorgrass, of Weatherbury,' that's every word I said, and I shouldn't ha' said that if't hadn't been for keeper Day's metheglin."

Out on to the main road again, the same one that we left at Stinsford crossroads, a short walk past the little hamlet of Troy Town, and we enter Puddletown (strictly Piddleton, from the A.S. *piddle*, a small stream), the old home of the de Pydels, and the "Weatherbury" of romance. Occupying a prominent position facing the village square where used to stand the maypole, stocks, and Hundred house, is a thatched house with a projecting window supported on columns, which architects consider to be one of the finest Georgian windows in the country. This was, in the eighteenth century, the private residence of the Boswells.

“Weatherbury” is a most interesting place, although somewhat altered since *Far from the Madding Crowd* was penned. The old malthouse, wherein the villagers gave such a warm welcome to Gabriel Oak on his taking service with Bathsheba, has vanished completely, but the church, of which a proposed rebuilding of an Elizabethan chancel on the lines of a larger original chancel has caused a fierce and bitter controversy in the press, has met with little molestation. It contains the Athelhampton Chapel, with a panelled entrance arch, in which are some remarkable monuments and brasses, the former of which include a magnificent recumbent effigy in alabaster, with a “vizored salade”, and a fluted shield, commemorating a member of the Martin family, who lived at the neighbouring Athelhampton Hall, a fine ancestral home, and the “Athel Hall” of the *Wessex Poems*. The Norman font in the church is worth inspection, as also are the fifteenth-century panelled roof of Spanish chestnut of the nave, and the Carolean gallery where Gabriel Oak sang in the choir.

Very simple were the old services in these village churches, with the farm hands attending service on Sunday afternoons as regularly as they went to work on Monday mornings. Now and then maybe a bucolic rustic would doze off to sleep, until his slumbers were disturbed by the beadle; and many of the old natives

can remember when this ecclesiastical official would rap his long wand of office on the skull of a sleeping rustic, with a crack that echoed through the sacred edifice. In the north porch of the church Sergeant Troy passed the night after Fanny Robin's funeral.

A short distance away is Lower Waterson, "a hoary building of the Jacobean stage of classic renaissance", and the home of Bathsheba Everdene, where the great "Shearing Barn", so delightfully described by Mr. Hardy, may still be seen, although the novelist had in his mind's eye the far more spacious and magnificent tithe barn at Abbotsbury. While at Waterson it is worth while to mount Waterson Ridge, the scene of *Time's Laughingstocks*, a poem that appeared in the *Fortnightly* of August, 1904.

From Puddletown through Tolpuddle (one of the numerous villages to which the Puddle or Piddle gives name), and we are quickly at Bere Regis, which Dr. Stukeley identified with the Roman *Ibernum*. This is the "Kingsbere" of the novels and the ancient seat of the Turbervilles, a family that flourishes still in Glamorgan, and of whom Tess was a fictitious descendant. Within the church, which has a remarkable carved roof, the gift of Cardinal Morton, who was born at Milborne Stileham, three or four miles away, are two canopied tombs of the Turbervilles. Half a mile to the north-east is Woodbury Hill, where was held the

great sheep fair, the "Greenhill Fair" where Troy performed the part of "Dick Turpin" at the circus. At Bere the smuggler Owlett was hidden after his struggle with the excise officers, and it was selected as a hiding place for the women by Miller Loveday, should Napoleon's threatened invasion prove successful. Here, too, beneath the Cardinal's noble gift, Yeobright's father put such power into his playing of the bass viol as to cause the windows to rattle, and "old Pa'son Gibbons to lift his hands in his great holy surplice as natural as if he'd been in common clothes, and seem to say to himself, 'oh for such a man in our parish!'"

Apart from its historical and literary associations Bere Regis is as charming a spot as exists in rural England, and one where the modern cultivation which demolishes the hedgerows and stubbs up the copses has not yet shown its evil presence. The old manor house of the Turbervilles has vanished, with the exception of a portion that still remains in Court Farm; and times have changed since the old race of manorial lords and squires were laid to rest in their family vaults. Here, as in most Dorset villages, the ancient families have died out or, owing to agricultural depression, have been driven into bankruptcy or exile. The manor houses have fallen into decay, with the exception perhaps, as here, of a solitary wing which serves



PORTISHAM

as a modern farmhouse. On the tombstones in the churchyard you may read names once honoured in the countryside, and far beyond it, names that are rapidly becoming extinct, except as what Grant Allen would have called "verbal fossils".

It is generally thought that the untitled landed gentry represent a longer connection with land than the nobility, whose estates have constantly been added to by purchase or inheritance. It is, however, quite otherwise; for of all the squirearchy there are very few families who can show an unbroken succession since the termination of an event so comparatively recent as the Wars of the Roses. True, there are a certain and a not inconsiderable number of Englishmen with large landed estates who are descended from ancestors who held land sometime before them; but it will generally be found that the ancestors were yeomen. It has been estimated by an eminent authority that an analysis of modern landowners in any English county will prove that not more than a dozen descend from forbears owning 3000 acres (the minimum qualification for a great landowner) in the time of Elizabeth; and that the peers, comparatively modern as the majority of them are, represent a much larger average of old families than the country squires.

If possible, the return journey from Bere Regis to

Dorchester should be made by way of "Egdon Heath", of which we get so impressive a description in the opening chapters of *The Return of the Native*. If the weather be fine, what could be better than a long tramp over the moor? especially as our most lasting memories of a landscape are those we gain afoot. Blue skies and green fields are things we are all familiar with; but there is assuredly nothing in the wide world that appeals to us so much as our English moorlands, and "Egdon", aglow with yellow gorse, and afire with purple heather, is as fine a sight as can be offered by these southern lands that fringe the Channel seas. It is not pretended, of course, that these combined Dorset heathlands can rival in extent or grandeur the great Devonian moorland that gives birth to the romantic River Dart; but in their own peculiar way they have no rival.

In *Domesday* this tract of country is called a "heathy, furzy, briary wilderness", and the antiquary Leland writes of it as being "overgrown with heth and moss". Mr. Hardy characterizes it finely in eight words as "singularly colossal and mysterious in its swarthy monotony." His description of it could have been penned only by one who was familiar with all its various moods, and whose mind had become absorbed with its mysterious and subtle influences.

“Ever since the beginning of vegetation its soil has worn the same antique brown dress, the natural and invariable garment of the peculiar formation. . . . It is unchanged and unchangeable, with a wild, weird beauty all its own. . . . It was a spot which returned upon the memory of those who loved it with an aspect of peculiar and kindly congruity. . . . Twilight combined with the scenery of Egdon Heath to evolve a thing majestic without severity, impressive without showiness, emphatic in its admonitions, grand in its simplicity.”

It was among the solitudes of these moorlands, and amid the fragrant meadow-lands of Dorchester, that William Barnes made himself sweet imageries the livelong day; and here Thomas Hardy has thought out his great prose romances, and clothed them with beautiful description. Certainly both of these great writers have revived much of the forgotten wealth of our language, and wander where you will in their beloved Dorset homeland, by winding stream or breezy down, the shade of the dead poet and the presence of the living novelist accompany you on your way.

Eight miles to the south of Dorchester is Weymouth, backed, as seen from the landward side, by the great promontory of Portland, lying like some stranded whale upon the waters. The quickest and easiest way to reach this “Budmouth” of the novels is by train, but by far the more interesting way is to walk or cycle. True, the rail motor has many “halts”, at which one can alight, but those who do the sights of a place between the trains miss a hundred natural

beauties and a thousand healthy pleasures granted to the pedestrian and the cyclist.

Leaving the county town by the Weymouth Road, and passing the "Rings" where Henchard and his wife met to discuss future arrangements, the first definite turning towards the right leads to Maiden Castle, where rise the steep and grassy tiers of the most stupendous prehistoric earthwork we possess, and one that was in existence for centuries before it was strengthened, and, for a short period, occupied probably by the Romans. A whole day is scarce sufficient in which to explore this great camp, with an area of 160 acres, that occupies the summit of a natural hill, and where the entrenchments and fortifications are of a most elaborate character.

Emerging from this prehistoric fortress, camp, and cattle-station at its western extremity, a short but hilly walk leads to the charming village of Upwey, nestling at the foot of a well-wooded hill where rises a spring of water, the source of the little River Wey. Upwey Church is a very interesting one of Perpendicular date. Some portions of the picturesque old mill here are introduced into the *Trumpet-Major*, but their locality has been moved to Sutton (Overcombe), a few miles away. Beyond the mill a sharp turn to the left joins the main road we left to reach Maiden Castle. Here, on the old vicinal way of the

Romans, stands the "Ship" inn, the hostel wherein Dick Dewy and Fancy Day became definitely engaged after their accidental meeting by the King's statue at Budmouth. Close at hand is the Ridgeway, the place where the Overcombe folk waited all night to see the King arrive; and where the opening scene of the first act of *The Dynasts* is laid. Adjoining the Ridgeway is Bincombe Down, with its steep, grass-covered sides rising sheer from the stragglng village below. Mr. Hardy writes: "The eye of any observer who cared for such things swept over the wave-washed town (Weymouth) and the bay beyond, and the Isle, with its pebble bank, lying on the sea to the left of these, like a great crouching animal tethered to the mainland".

On this hill the soldiers were encamped in readiness to repel Napoleon's threatened invasion, and here came the Mill party in the *Trumpet-Major*, to see the review, and to overhear the exclamations of the excited rustics: "There's King Jarge!" "That's Queen Sharlett!" "Princess Sophiar and Mellyer!" In the *Melancholy Hussar* Blagdon is depicted as the spot whereon Tina and Christoph were shot as deserters.

From Upwey a fine walk along the Waddon Valley, the scene of *The Lacking Sense*; past Corton Church, with its pre-Reformation stone altar,

and the Jacobean farmhouse of Waddon; and through the charming hamlet of Coryates, leads to Portisham, or Po'sham, one of the most interesting of the villages that lie at the back of the Chesil Beach. On the outskirts of the village a little stone-roofed house, almost covered with creepers, was the home of Thomas Masterman Hardy, the Flag-captain of the *Victory*, in whose arms Nelson died. The house is still occupied by the descendants of the gallant seaman, one of three Dorset captains at Trafalgar, and many relics of their famous ancestor are preserved within the dwelling. It was to this house that Bob Love-day came to visit Captain Hardy when he thought of joining the crew of the *Victory*.

High above the village, on Blackdown or Blagdon Hill, stands the Hardy Monument that forms a conspicuous land- and sea-mark for many miles around.

Portisham is one of the most charming of Dorset's villages; the church having many points of interest that include a leaden roof and a very good tower; while grouped around it are old-fashioned thatched cottages, and ancient Tudor houses with the heavy dripstones and massive mullions so characteristic of their era. Portisham was the birthplace of Sir Andrew Riccard, "President of the East India and Turkey Companies". He left an only daughter, who became



WEYMOUTH AND PORTLAND



successively the wife of Lord Kensington and Lord Berkeley of Stratton.

Just beyond Portisham is Abbotsbury, where are some considerable remains of a monastic building founded originally, *circa* 1044, for secular canons, and converted, in later days, into a noble Benedictine Abbey, of which the tithe barn, a very beautiful example, still exists. The little chapel perched on the summit of St. Catherine's Hill is an architectural gem of the Perpendicular period, and one that should not be missed by anyone with antiquarian tastes. The village church is also a good piece of building, with a curious representation of the Trinity let into the wall of the tower, and a fine Jacobean pulpit. While here, a visit should be paid to Lord Ilchester's famous Swannery and Decoy.

As we are now a good deal out of the direct-road route from Dorchester to Weymouth, the visitor may be advised to take the rail motor from Abbotsbury to the maritime town, especially as, after passing through the Waddon Vale, the road leading thither is bare, treeless, and devoid of interest.

Weymouth has been described a thousand times, and it is not unworthy of it, lying as it does in a long curve with the whole town visible from the sea. It is artistically placed, and is a brilliant if somewhat old-fashioned jewel set amid a sea of amethyst and

turquoise. Modern Weymouth is made up of two distinct boroughs, Weymouth and Melcombe Regis, which were united by Queen Elizabeth. It is a town whose beginnings are lost in obscurity, although its early history is not of a very engrossing kind. After passing through various phases of fortune and misfortune, with a preponderance of the latter, the place was nothing but a decayed seaport until George III and his Court, coming here to reside in the closing years of the eighteenth century, instilled new life into the town, which has retained, despite the modern builder, considerable architectural remains of this period of its greatest prosperity. The shops have unfortunately been modernized, but the greater number of the old Georgian rows of dwelling houses are intact. Gloucester Lodge, now the Gloucester Hotel, was the royal residence, before which "a picket of a thousand men mounted guard every day". Queen Charlotte's Second Keeper of the Robes was Fanny Burney, who, in her *Diary*, has left us a very interesting account of the Court life at Weymouth.

With the exception of Casterbridge, Budmouth figures more frequently in the Wessex novels than any other place, and is especially prominent in *The Trumpet-Major*. By the statue of King George, "wonderfully and fearfully made", Dick Dewy met Fancy Day; and the bridge over the harbour is men-

tioned in the *Well-Beloved*. Bob Loveday was familiar with its harbour, and his brother John knew its barracks; and here Anne Garland studied the latest fashions. It was on the esplanade that Festus Derriman cut "a fine figure of a soldier", and here Jocelyn Pierston was staying when he met with two incarnations of the Well-Beloved. In *The Dynasts*, the interview between King George and Pitt takes place at Gloucester Lodge, and in the Old Rooms Inn across the harbour the Battle of Trafalgar was discussed.

Some four miles to the south of Weymouth lies the "Isle of Slingers" (Portland), the pleasantest way to reach which is by one of the numerous steamers that make the trip. Entering an opening in the great breakwater that encloses the mighty roadstead of Portland, the visitor will notice the ruins of an old castle that stand on the edge of a sandy and rapidly disappearing cliff. This is all that is left of Sandsfoot Castle, built in the time of Henry VIII, and the "right goodlie Castel" of Leland's day. This was the place appointed by Pierston for his farewell to Avice. Our little craft threads her way quickly through the mighty battleships and cruisers that lie securely within this murally enclosed basin of sea, and we glide into the little harbour at the base of the mighty rock. The first aspect of the place, owing partly to the absence of trees, is stern and rather uninviting, but, for those

who know it, the rocky mass of Portland has many attractions. From the high land a fine view is obtained of the Chesil Beach, that extraordinary bank of pebbles that connects the "island" with the mainland at Abbotsbury, ten miles away. Farther west is Bridport, the "Port Bredy" of the novels, and a pleasantly situated town, whose marine suburb of West Bay contains a useful little harbour wherein vessels of a small tonnage can enter at high tides. Six miles to the north of Bridport is Beaminster (Emminster), the home of Angel Clare, whither Tess made her way in the hope of obtaining news of her husband.

Interesting as is the rock of Portland as seen from the Bill or from the sandy little cove of Church Ope, the seaward faces of the promontory are best observed from the deck of a boat, when all the elements that go usually to form a picture on a level surface are here raised nearly to the perpendicular, and, by reflecting the sun's rays at a slight angle, produce effects as violent in their nature as they are startling in their novelty of colour. In *The Souls of the Slain*, the Bill or Beal of Portland is well described:

"The thick lids of night closed upon me
Alone at the Bill
Of the Isle by the Race—
Many-caverned, bald, wrinkled of face—
And with darkness and silence the spirit was on me
To brood and be still."

From this wild spot Ann Garland watched the *Victory* depart with Bob Loveday on board. Turning inland we see Pennsylvania Castle. This was the home of Pierston, and near it is the cottage wherein Avice dwelt; while, in the adjoining Ope Churchyard, Jocelyn wooed the granddaughter of the first Avice. The castle is comparatively modern, having been built by John Penn in 1800, from designs by Wyatt.

From numberless points on the tableland of Portland many exquisite views may be obtained, some looking seaward to where the distant St. Aldhelm's Head marks the eastern limit of Weymouth Bay. Inland, the prospect includes the town of Weymouth, with the heights of Dorset stretching into the heart of the county. Away to the west the waves of the Channel moan unceasingly, where Chesil lifts her pebbly ridge, and Golden Cap, with its summit of yellow sand, marks the site of Lyme Regis, with its memories of Charles II, Monmouth, Jane Austen, and Mary Mitford. Westward, too, over an expanse of southern sea, the sun sinks behind the belt of blue, and flushes the golden glow of sky with varying hues of rose and amethyst, until the overarching heaven seems etherealized into a transparent canopy that veils the mystic radiance of some hidden glory.

WEYMOUTH TO POOLE

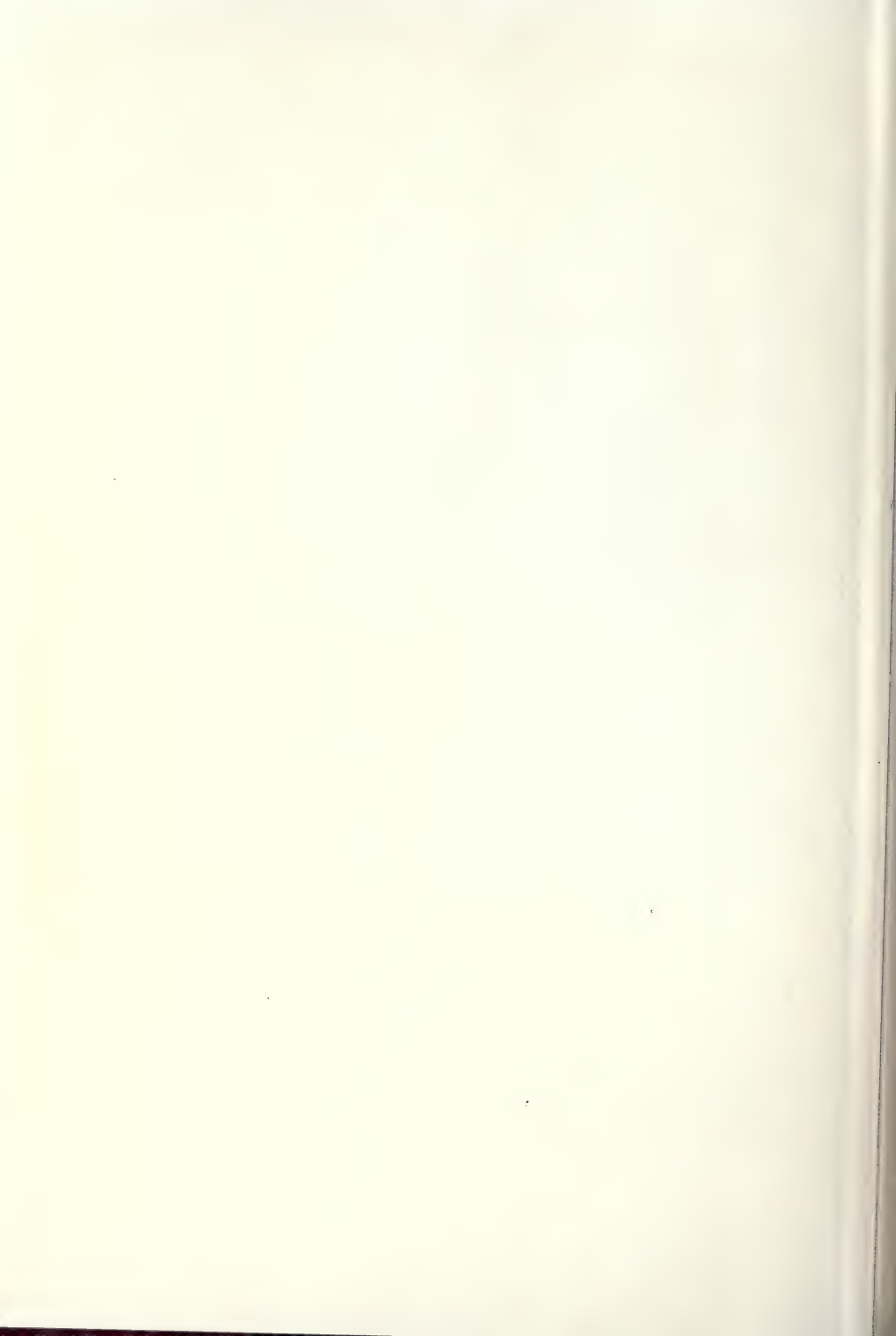
The visitor to the Hardy country will quickly realize that, in spite of railways, motor cars, and cycles, more than half of South Dorset is a closed book to those who do not walk; while the beautiful coast scenery of this historic land is for the pedestrian alone. The iron road conveys the conventional tourist from an inland to a maritime town, motor cars and cycles thread the great highways, now stripped of their high and shade-giving hedges for the convenience of their mechanically propelled travellers. Contrast this with a tramp over a succession of grassy downs where the salt sea-mist fills the natural amphitheatres made by the hollows in the retreating hills, and across sandy bays eaten out of the soft chalk by the ceaseless action of the sea. There is an indefinable charm in a view combining sea and cliff, hill and dale, the near orchard and the distant down, within the field of vision.

It is impossible by mere words to convey any idea of the wealth of colour exhibited along the Dorset coast, where the brilliant tints of the sea-worn rocks are contrasted with hues of vivid green; for here



E. W. HASLEHUST.

GATEWAY, POXWELL MANOR HOUSE



verdure triumphs over decay, and drapes the wrecks of time with the richest vegetation. In a wide open country such as this, great clouds sweep over the hills, casting as they travel moving shadows over land and sea; so that before long we are perfectly intoxicated with the charms of the district, where idlers forget their ennui, and invalids gain strength in its invigorating air.

Leaving Weymouth by the Wareham Road, and past the low-lying but picturesque marshlands of Lodmoor, we arrive at Preston, where the much-disturbed tessellated floor of a good Roman villa may be seen for the payment of sixpence. Near the roadside is a small one-arched bridge that has been claimed by some antiquaries to be of Roman, and by others of Norman, date. Many think it to be a mediaeval pack-horse bridge.

Preston's sister village of Sutton Poyntz is the "Overcombe" of *The Trumpet-Major*, with its mill-pond, which Ann Garland surveyed from her chamber window. "Immediately before her was the large, smooth millpond, overfull, and intruding into the hedge and into the road." On the hillside at the back of the village is the gigantic figure of George III on horseback, cut out of the chalk in 1808. This work of art is 280 feet in length and 323 feet in height, and there is no better way to reach it than

from Sutton. Should we make the ascent we can act as Ann Garland did on her visit here with the Trumpet-Major, namely, pace "from the horse's head down his breast to his hoof, back by way of the King's bridle-arm, past the bridge of his nose, and into his cocked hat", or we can follow the example of the Trumpet-Major, and stand, "in a melancholy attitude within the rowel of his majesty's right spur".

Descending the hill and passing through Osmington, where nothing need detain us, we reach the village of Poxwell, a name that some authors assure us is a corruption of Puck's well; but it is more likely that it comes from *Pochesvill* of the *Domesday Survey*. This is the "Oxwell" of the novels; and the singularly picturesque Jacobean house is "Oxwell Hall", where resided old Derriman in the *Trumpet-Major*. Apart from its literary associations this old building is well worth a visit by anyone who is interested in these old types of domestic architecture. It is one of hundreds of old manor houses in Dorset, and elsewhere, that have become degraded in the social scale to the status of a farmhouse. Its most pleasing and distinctive feature is the gatehouse or porter's lodge, the keystone of the gateway arch bearing the date 1634. The lower floor of this pleasing little erection gives entrance to a beautiful walled-in garden of velvet lawns bordered by bright

flower-beds. The upper room, approached by a flight of stone steps from the garden, is lighted by two small windows, one looking towards the house, the other commanding a view of the drive. This upper room is known as the "Fool's Chamber", the tradition being that the fool of the family was allowed a last throw at any departing guests from his coign of vantage. For the purposes of his story Mr. Hardy has placed the house considerably nearer to "Overcombe" (Sutton) than it really is.

A short walk from Poxwell would land us at Osington Mills, on the coast, a most delightful little spot, where hot lobster teas are one of the standing dishes at the Picnic Inn. From here Lulworth can be reached by a fine walk past Ringstead Bay and a long toil up the grassy shoulder of Whitenose, the whole being one of the best coast walks to be found in Dorset. The main road to Lulworth proceeds from Poxwell to Warmwell Cross (Warm'ell Cross), the place where Stockdale released the excisemen who had been overtaken by the smugglers. The whole of this portion of the coast and its Hinterland, figure in Mr. Hardy's smuggling stories, the illicit cargoes being hidden in the neighbouring church of Owermoigne.

Near Warmwell Cross is Warmwell House, an interesting Jacobean residence that was for some

time the home of John Saddler, the famous Cromwellian jurist, who was despoiled of all his property at the Restoration. Another interesting old house is that of Owermoigne, the manor of which, then called Ogres, or Owers, was held by William le Moigne "of our lord the King in capite by the service and serjeantry of being caterer in the King's kitchen, and keeper of his larder". A fine feature of the house is a range of beautiful and original thirteenth-century windows, in the solar on the first floor. This is the "Nether-Moynton" of *The Distracted Preacher*, where stands the church to which Lizzy guided Stockdale. A recent restoration has swept away the gallery stairs beneath which the illicit cargoes were hidden, but the tower within which the smugglers lay concealed is much as it was when described in the story.

Another way to reach Lulworth is to take the turn by the Red Lion that leads through Winfrith Newburgh, a pretty little village, but of no particular interest save for an old manorial custom by which Robert de Newburgh held Winfrith "by the service of giving water for the hands of our lord the King on the day of his coronation; and to have the basin and ewer for the service aforesaid". At the coronation of James II a claim was made by the lord of the manor to perform this service, but the claim was not allowed. We find also that the tithing man of the



LULWORTH COVE



neighbouring village of Coombe Keynes was obliged to do suit at Winfrith court leet; and, after repeating the following incoherent lines, was mulcted in the sum of threepence:—

“With my white rod,
And I am a fourth post,
That threepence makes three,

God bless the King, and the lord of the franchise;
Our weights and our measures are lawful and true.
Good-morrow, Mr. Steward; I have no more to say to you.”

Coombe Keynes is situated a mile or so to the south of Wool, its chief claim to notice being the singularly beautiful pre-Reformation chalice preserved within the church, a building that was extensively restored in 1860. The chalice is one of three pieces of pre-Reformation church plate that now remain in the county, although out of some three hundred parishes over one hundred have retained their Elizabethan chalices, while seventy possess Communion plate of the seventeenth century.

The Coombe Keynes chalice is in excellent condition, and is surpassed in beauty only by the very similar but slightly earlier example at Wylve, in Wiltshire. Its height is $6\frac{3}{8}$ inches; diameter of bowl, 4 inches; depth, 2 inches; narrowest part of base, $3\frac{3}{8}$ inches; widest part, $5\frac{1}{4}$ inches. The bowl is broad and conical; the slender stem hexagonal and quite

plain, with ogee moulded bands at the junctions. The knob is full sized, having six lobes spirally twisted with traceried openings, terminating in angels' heads, crowned. The date is about 1500, if not somewhat earlier. The two other examples of pre-Reformation plate in Dorset are a paten at Buckhorn Weston, and a chalice at Sturminster Marshall.

A short walk from Winfrith, and we arrive at our destination, the romantic and justly famed Lulworth Cove. During the summer months this attractive little spot can be easily reached by steamer from Weymouth, and for those to whom the literary associations and natural beauties of the landward route make no appeal, the short sea voyage of about an hour's duration has much to recommend it, while an ideal holiday jaunt is to make the outward journey on foot or wheel, and return by sea.

Who among the readers of Mr. Hardy's novels has not longed to visit the far-famed Lulworth Cove? that "small basin of sea enclosed by the cliffs", wherein Troy bathed after spending the night in the porch of Puddletown Church. The sea entrance to the little landlocked bay requires careful navigation by reason of "the two projecting spurs of rock which formed the pillars of Hercules to this miniature Mediterranean". This is the "Lulstead", and occasionally the "Lullwind" of the Wessex novels, tales, and

poems, and is the scene of the Napoleonic sketch in *Life's Little Ironies*, entitled *A Tradition of 1804*. Here Cytherea Graye met Edward Springrove, and here the dead bodies of Stephen Hardcombe and his cousin's wife were washed ashore.

The prospect from the cliffs that overlook the cove is a very extensive one. To the west the Bay of Weymouth, with a small portion of the town, is visible, with the green heights of the down in its rear. South-west is the bold and rocky mass of Portland, while to the east the eye takes in the projecting portions of the strangely contorted cliffs of the Purbeck coast line, and the dangerous Kimmeridge Ledges, beyond which rises the high wall-like ridge of cliff that terminates in the bluff promontory of St. Aldhelm's Head.

The village of West Lulworth is rather barren of interest, and the little trade of the place seems to be confined entirely to administering to the necessities of visitors and pilgrims. Sad to relate, this secluded spot, where untrammelled nature has reigned supreme for centuries, is beginning to show signs of ugly modernity, and bathing cabins are encroaching on its encircling belt of shingle. Nothing, however, can vulgarize Lulworth except in patches, for, modernize it how you will, it will always retain its rugged crags that tower above its sea margin, and the

complex witchery of its rock-bestrewn coast. The background of Millais's famous picture, "The Departure of the Romans" is a view of the Dorset coast looking from the cliffs of Lulworth towards Weymouth, the standpoint being Dungy, with St. Oswald's Bay in the foreground, and Whitenose terminating the splendid lateral prospect of the cliffs. It is a singularly literal rendering of the scene. At the same time learned historians tell us that it is by no means certain that any of the Roman legions left this country by way of the Dorset coast.

The greatest architectural attraction of the neighbourhood is Lulworth Castle, standing in a finely wooded park of 640 acres. The building is in the form of a cube, and is of early Jacobean date, having been built almost entirely with material from the Abbey of Bindon, near Wool, when such was demolished at the Reformation. The façade of the edifice is ornamented with heraldic shields and allegorical figures representing Music and Painting. In 1641 it was purchased by the Weld family, who still own it. It was visited by James I and Charles II, while George III and his family were frequent visitors during their residence at Weymouth. Charles X, when exiled from France in 1830, also found asylum here, by the hospitality of Mr. Joseph Weld. The interior of the castle may be seen on application to



WOOL HOUSE



the Lulworth Estate Office at Wool, and it is well worth while to apply for permission, as the house contains some fine apartments and a curious set of portraits painted by Giles Hussey, a native of Marnhull, the harmony of whose colour-scheme was corrected by a musical scale. The Welds are a Roman Catholic family of whom the famous Cardinal Weld was the most prominent member.

Close to the Castle stands the Protestant church on the south side and the Catholic chapel on the north. The latter, built in 1786 by the special leave of George III, was described by Fanny Burney as "a Pantheon in miniature, and ornamented with immense wealth and richness. The altar is all of the finest variegated marbles, and precious stones are glittering from every angle", a description that holds good to-day.

From the castle a most charming walk through a wood and down over grassy fields leads to Arish Mell Gap, a narrow bay shut in by high grass-covered downs, and near which is situated the Monastery Farm, founded in 1794, for Trappist monks, by Thomas Weld and his son, who afterwards attained the dignity of cardinal.

From Lulworth the enterprising pedestrian can find an abundance of magnificent coast walks by Worbarrow Tout, the Kimmeridge Ledges, and St.

Aldhelm's Head. The walk towards the last-named is one of the wildest solitude, the only living creatures being the white sea-birds, and the only sounds the murmur of the waves as they surge round the bleak pinnacles of rock. Here and there, where the trackway turns at an angle, we catch a glimpse of vast cavernous recesses, some natural and some the work of men's hands, where ponderous masses have been riven away from the face of the cliff, and tumbled headlong into the water, where they lie amid the swirling eddies of the tide.

It is impossible to describe adequately the manifold beauties of the Purbeck coast line, which concentrates in itself all the elements of the bleak and the picturesque, pastoral valleys and grassy downs that end seawards in great walls of barren rock and masses of fallen cliff. Some old muzzle-loading guns lying on the shore between Winspit and Seacombe mark the site of the wreck of the *Halsewell*, an East Indiaman that was driven ashore here with great loss of life on January 6, 1786.

While at Lulworth the reader of Mr. Hardy's romances will not fail to visit Wool, and the old manor house of the Turbervilles wherein was enacted one of the most dramatic scenes in English fiction. Crossing the old bridge of "five yawning arches" we stand before "Wellbridge House", where Tess and

Angel Clare came to spend their honeymoon. "Welcome to one of your ancestral mansions!" was the bridegroom's greeting, as his bride passed the threshold of the house. At the head of the stairway are the two panels on which are depicted the portraits of those ancestors, the sight of which caused Tess to shudder. The house itself is an interesting specimen of ancient domestic architecture, from which in the gloom of the evening the phantom coach and four drives out of the gateway; but this ghostly equipage is visible only to a member or near relative of the Turberville family. The house and bridge never look better or more romantic than when their masses of grey masonry loom out against the evening sky. At such times the soft murmur of the night wind through the rushes that edge the shimmering water, and a farewell gleam of sunlight through a rift in the long low clouds, seem to symbolize the spirit of Tess.

One of the best-known members of this old Dorset family was George Turberville (1540-1610). He was secretary to Sir Thomas Randolph, Queen Elizabeth's ambassador in Scotland and Russia. He was the author of several books on *Falconrie* and hunting, but the one by virtue of which he ranks amongst the Elizabethan poets was the *Epitaphes, Epigrams, Songs, and Sonnets*, the second edition of which was published in 1567.

Contemporary with Turberville were Barnabe Googe, Thomas Churchyard the soldier and poetaster, Thomas Phaer, the wellnigh forgotten lawyer of Norwich, who translated the first nine books of the *Æneid* into fourteen-syllable verse. Other contemporaries were Sir Thomas Chaloner, a soldier and diplomatist, who wrote both prose and verse; and Arthur Golding, an industrious translator of Latin and French theological works.

Half a mile away is Bindon Abbey, of which the whole of the Abbey Church can be traced among the ruins. Large portions also remain of the sacristy, chapterhouse, and calefactory. The original foundation belonged to the Cistercian Order, and was established in 1172, and Professor Windle tells us that after it was surrendered to the king in 1539, "its twelve bells were stolen and appropriated by the churches of Wool, Coombe, and Fordington; a tale which is embodied in the local rhyme:

"Wool streams and Coombe wells,
Fordington cuckolds stole Bindon Bells".

Two empty stone coffins, one tomb, and one broken grave slab of the abbot's remain, including one with the matrix of a brass, the margin of which has an inscription in Lombardic capitals recording



WAREHAM



the interment of Abbot Richard de Maners. Here, too, is the old stone coffin described by Mr. Hardy:

“Against the north wall was the empty stone coffin of an Abbot, in which every tourist with a turn for grim humour was accustomed to stretch himself. In this Clare carefully laid Tess.”

Near at hand Bindon Mill, with its picturesque setting, makes a charming picture, and one that is a great favourite with artists. It was here that Angel Clare came to learn the art of milling.

A short ride in the train or a pleasant walk by road from Wool leads to Wareham, one of the oldest towns in Dorset, and the “Anglebury” of the novels, where, at the Red Lion, Ethelberta and Lady Petherwin were staying when the story of *The Hand of Ethelberta* opens. In the earlier editions of *The Return of the Native*, Wareham figures as “Southerton”, the town from whence Thomassin fled in the reddleman’s cart, when the defect was discovered in the marriage licence which postponed her union with Wildeve. It was at Lychett (Flychett), a few miles away, that Sol and Lord Mountclere’s brother stopped to change horses on their way to bar the wedding of Lord Mountclere and Ethelberta at Swanage (Knollsea).

Wareham itself is an interesting little borough, most delightfully placed on rising ground that slopes

to the River Frome on the south, and to the Trent or Puddle on the north. These two streams flow into Poole Harbour, so that the boating man has an abundance of freshwater sailing, which can be varied by taking the craft around the numerous creeks and inlets of Poole Harbour, past the wooded isle of Brownsea, and so out into the open Channel beyond. For those who are fond of boating on a moderate scale this corner of Poole Harbour is an ideal spot; for although the experienced yachtsman may consider river sailing rather tame, he will find the adjoining harbour of Poole large enough to satisfy his roving propensities, and with winds and waves of sufficient strength to test his skill to the full.

Wareham town has retained several links with its ancient state, which may be said to be epitomized in the earthen ramparts that enclose it on all sides but that guarded by the waters of the Frome. Upon and around these grassy walls the old-time inhabitants fought the Danes with varying fortunes; for early in the eleventh century the town was captured by Cnut, who made it his port, and to some extent his headquarters, until bought off with a grant of money.

The antiquary should not fail to visit St. Martin's Church, a reputed Saxon building, with some interesting Early Norman features that include a narrow

chancel arch. The parish church of Lady St. Mary has been over-"restored", but the exquisite little side chapels of St. Edward the Martyr and St. Thomas à Becket remain unspoilt. An old stone coffin, a lead font, and two interesting cross-legged effigies are worthy of attention, as also are two inscribed pillars of stone that have been alleged to be portions of an old Roman altar. Of Holy Trinity Church, Hutchins, the historian of Dorset, was once rector.

Before the silting up of Poole Harbour, Wareham was an important port, and here in 1291 Edward I came to superintend the manning of some ships for one of his numerous expeditions against the French; and in later days the profits of the salmon fishery were given by Henry VIII to Catherine of Aragon as a dowry. In the reign of the third Edward the town furnished three ships and fifty-nine men for the siege of Calais.

Mr. Hardy's pre-eminence as a novelist is apt to make us forget that Mrs. Craik (Miss Mulock) was a frequent visitor here, and *Agatha's Husband* is full of references to the town and the neighbourhood, and contains some delightful character sketches of its inhabitants. Here also lives "Orme Agnus" (Mr. J. C. Higginbotham), at Northport House close to the railway station.

Situated halfway between Wareham and Swanage,

and easily reached from either place, are the ruins of Corfe Castle, all that is left of what was, until the building was demolished by order of the Parliament, one of the most powerful fortresses ever erected in Europe. Tradition associates Corfe Castle, or Corfe, with the murder of "Saynt Edward Kyng and Martyr"; but certain modern antiquaries are rather suspicious of the story, and it is very doubtful if any portion of the existing masonry is of an earlier date than the Conquest, although it is quite possible that so favourable a site would be chosen for its natural defensive properties long before the advent of the Normans. The *Saxon Chronicle*, recording the murder of Edward, does not mention a castle, but says the foul deed was done "at Corfes Geät", where stood the *domus Elfridæ*. It has not inaptly been termed the "Royal Prison of Purbeck", and the many famous personages incarcerated here include some French nobles whom King John starved to death early in the thirteenth century. Here also the same monarch imprisoned his niece Eleanor, together with two daughters of the Scottish King, William, sent as hostages. Edward II was confined here by Queen Isabella and her paramour, Roger Mortimer. After being held by various nobles, including George, Duke of Clarence, of Malmsey-wine celebrity, the castle was bought by Sir Christopher Hatton from Queen



E. W. H. M. H. U. S. Y.

CORFE CASTLE



Elizabeth, and was eventually purchased by Sir John Bankes, to whose descendants it still belongs. On Sir John's joining Charles I at York, in 1642, Lady Bankes held Corfe for the King, and so successful was her heroic defence, that it was only through the treachery of Colonel Pitman, one of the garrison, that she was forced to capitulate in 1645, when the brave defenders were allowed to march out, bearing their arms and with their colours flying. The estates of this "Brave Dame Mary" escaped confiscation, but she was mulcted in heavy fines, while the fortress she had so gallantly held against overwhelming odds was reduced to a mass of picturesque ruins, where wall-flowers grow in the crannies, sweetbrier twists around the base of a bastion, and ivy and honeysuckle crown a detached fragment of a ruined gateway. On every side great masses of broken masonry lie in heaps on the grass, or are seen suspended as if by magic in mid-air, a testimony to the destructive power of gunpowder and to the excellence of the mortar used by the Norman builders. The ancient name of the place was Corvsgate, from *Ceorfan* to cut, and referred to the natural cutting that surrounds the hill on the summit of which this magnificent fortress was erected.

The little old-world village of Corfe has also many architectural attractions in the way of projecting upper stories supported on columns, gabled houses, and the

fine old manor house of the Dackombes. The ruined castle on its scarped hill is fascinating from every point of view. Whether flushed with the warm tints of sunset, veiled by opalescent haze, or looming stern and dark against a dull and stormy sky, it has always great pictorial charm, and a rugged beauty that suggests the embodiment of mediaevalism, its grandeur, pride, cruelty, arrogance, and death.

In the Wessex novels Corfe Castle appears under its ancient name of Corvsgate, and it figures as such in *The Hand of Ethelberta*, a novel in the early editions of which it is also referred to as "Coomb Castle". Here came Ethelberta on the donkey she had hired at Knollsea (Swanage) on the occasion of the meeting of the Imperial Association, to which she had been invited by Lord Mountclere.

"Accordingly Ethelberta crossed the bridge over the moat, and rode under the first archway of the outer ward. . . . The arrow-slits, portcullis-grooves, and staircases met her eye as familiar friends, for in her childhood she had once paid a visit to the spot."

Among these historic ruins and the fashionable company that had come to inspect them, Ethelberta disowned her donkey, the faithful steed that had served her so well; and here Lord Mountclere presented her to "Sir Cyril and Lady Blandsbury; Lady Jane Joy; also the learned Dr. Fore; Mr. Small, a talented writer,

who never printed his works; the Reverend Mr. Brook, Rector; the Very Reverend Dr. Taylor, Dean; and the rather reverend Mr. Tinkleton, Nonconformist, who had slipped into the fold by chance."

Five miles from Corfe Castle is Swanage, a town that is rapidly coming to the front as a fashionable watering-place. During the summer an excellent steamboat service connects it with Bournemouth and Weymouth, from both of which it is also easily reached by rail. The place has changed vastly since it served as a background for Ethelberta's life history, the place where she retired to marry Lord Mountclere, with Sol and the bridegroom's brother vainly endeavouring to reach "Knollsea" in time to stop the ceremony. Mr. Hardy writes: "Knollsea was a seaside village, lying snug within two headlands as between a finger and thumb. Everybody in the parish who was not a boatman was a quarrier, unless he were the gentleman who owned half the property and had been a quarryman, or the other gentleman who owned the other half, and had been to sea."

"The row of rotten piles" to which the steamer was moored in the days when *The Hand of Ethelberta* was penned, have long since been supplemented by a substantial pier, while in place of the boatmen and quarriers the inhabitants to-day seem to depend for a living on attending to the needs of the many

tourists attracted to Swanage by its splendid climate and beautiful surroundings.

A fine walk over Ballard Down not only commands some exceptional and sweeping views of the Dorset and Hampshire coast, but leads to Studland, a charming village with an ancient Norman church and a glorious little bay of golden sand, that is edged by the wide expanse of unenclosed moorland known as Studland Heath. The magnificent panorama from the high land above Studland embraces nearly the whole of the eastern half of Dorset, the far-famed Isle of Purbeck, and as we turn from the amphitheatre of rolling downs the eye ranges to the blue sea breaking at the base of the chalk cliffs of the Isle of Wight, or foaming round the near promontory of Peveril Point.

Away in a north-easterly direction the low-lying lands that edge the creeks and mudflats of Poole Harbour spread out like a map, and contrast their warm greens with the silvery tones of the great harbour. A brief description of Poole is given in one of the short stories of *Life's Little Ironies*, where it figures beneath the thin disguise of "Havenpool".

During the smuggling days Poole, together with the majority of these south-country ports, enjoyed a very unenviable reputation, and was the home of



POOLE HARBOUR FROM STUDLAND

F. W. H. G. L. G. G. G.



the celebrated Harry Paye, or "Arripay" as the Spaniards who so dreaded him rendered the name, who is said to have brought into Poole Harbour, on one occasion, more than one hundred prizes from the ports of Brittany, and "to have scoured the channel of Flanders so powerfully that no ship could pass that way without being taken".

Poole has retained quite a number of its ancient domestic buildings, including the problematical fifteenth-century structure known as the "Town Cellars"; but nothing is known with regard to the purposes for which it was originally erected. Some antiquaries believe it to have been connected with the Guild of St. George, others hold that it was used as a manorial storehouse, wherein were deposited the goods left by the lord of the manor. Michael Drayton in his *Polyolbion* depicts the rivers Frome and Puddle as entertaining each other, "oft praising lovely Poole, their best beloved bay"; and in truth Poole Harbour is charming at any state of the tide. It has been the haunt of the painter since the days when Turner found such uncommon sources of inspiration along the shores of its wooded creeks, and counterfeit presentments of this Dorset lakeland hang on the walls of many a European picture gallery. Exclusive of all islands the area of this vast sea-lake is ten thousand acres, while it has been calculated that

thirty-six million tons of water flow into and out of the narrow entrance at every spring tide.

The sheet of water is studded with wooded islands that add not a little to its manifold charms. The most considerable of these islands are Branksea or Brownsea, Fursey, Long, Round, and Green Islands.

For the pedestrian there is a delightful walk along the edge of the water to Haven Point with its Marconi installation, thence by way of cliff and chine to Bournemouth; but the beauties of this great salt lake are only fully revealed to those who woo them from the water.

By means of a motor launch, with a dinghy in tow for landing purposes, a thorough exploration can be made of such little-known spots as Pergins' Island, with its clumps of fir trees, Hole's and Lychett Bays.

Another charming water trip is by way of that arm of the harbour where there is a confluence of three waters—the creek of Middlebere; the Corfe river, that debouches at Wych Passage House, the ancient port of Corfe Castle; and the Upper Bushey. As someone has fittingly said: "All will agree that a fairer sight than the panorama of Poole and its much-fretted and freakish harbour one would have to go far to see!"

The still meadows that lie around this landlocked haven are green with the growth of centuries; and

over the golden corn waving freely on the upland slopes, or above the lavender fields of Broadstone, the lark in summer air is singing. Quietly, with clear spaces of light above them, in silver lapses under the darkening trees, the little rivers thread the fertile valleys, and the Frome runs eastwards from Dorchester, linking, as with a liquid thread, the far-famed county town with the equally ancient maritime port of Wareham.

If this land of Purbeck as a whole has altered but little since the days when our Norman rulers made it a happy hunting ground, its people have changed still less, and its distinctive class—the marblers or quarriers—have been practically unaffected by the tide of civilization that has affected the rest of the county in thought, dress, and customs.

The working of Purbeck marble is one of the oldest industries in the country, for the material was used by the Romans for the lining of sepulchral cists, and in later days it was in great demand for the fashioning of effigies, monuments, pillars, and similar architectural adornments. From Purbeck came the stone for some of the gates of London, for the Cross at Charing, for the abbeys of Westminster and Bindon, and for many portions of the cathedrals of Exeter, Salisbury, and Winchester.

It is a matter for regret that the early history of

the Purbeck quarriers is obscure, owing largely to the records of the company having been destroyed by a fire at Corfe Castle. It is generally agreed, however, that they are of Norman descent, for certain names indicative of French origin are still very common among the natives of Corfe and Swanage. Although the trade is a declining one, a good deal of quarrying for the rougher kinds of stone is still carried on by the "Company of Marblers of the Isle of Purbeck". No one but the son of a freeman can become a member of this ancient association, though a freeman's wife is made a freewoman on payment of a shilling—the "marriage shilling" as it is called—so that she may be able to carry on the work should she outlive her husband. One of the articles of the guild, and one that is still rigidly enforced, is that not even a day's work shall be given to a non-member. Some serious disturbances have taken place when attempts have been made to introduce "outside" labour. The most important right claimed by the marblers, the right to enter on any man's land and work the stone, has not been conceded for many years. The natives assert that this concession was granted to them by royal charter, but it is doubtful if their claim could be legally enforced at the present time. The admission of apprentices is governed by a number of curious laws. A "free boy" may enter

the quarries and work without being bound, and until he attains his majority he is subject to his father, to whom his wages are supposed to belong by right.

It is to be hoped that the demand for the stone will continue, and that the "Company of Purbeck Marblers" will long remain a link with the dim and distant past.

While in the neighbourhood of Poole the tourist should not fail to visit Wimborne, with its magnificent minster, and Bournemouth, which latter, although just beyond the eastern boundary of Dorset, was the town (Sandbourne) where was enacted almost the final scene of Mr. Hardy's great drama of *Tess*:

"This fashionable watering-place, with its eastern and its western stations, its piers, its groves of pines, its promenades, and its covered gardens, was, to Angel Clare, like a fairy place suddenly created by the stroke of a wand, and allowed to get a little dusty. An outlying tract of the enormous Egdon Waste was close at hand, yet on the very verge of that tawny piece of antiquity such a glittering novelty as this pleasure city had chosen to spring up. Within the space of a mile from its outskirts every irregularity of the soil was prehistoric; every channel an undisturbed British trackway; not a sod having been turned there since the days of the Cæsars. Yet the exotic had grown here, suddenly as the prophet's gourd; and had drawn hither Tess. By the midnight lamps he went up and down the winding ways of this new world in an old one, and could discern between the trees and against the stars the lofty roofs, chimneys, gazebos, and towers of the numerous fanciful residences of which the place was composed.

It was a city of detached mansions; a Mediterranean lounging-place on the English Channel; and as seen now by night it seemed even more imposing than it was. The sea was near at hand, but not intrusive; it murmured, and he thought it was the pines; the pines murmured in precisely the same tones, and he thought they were the sea."

Space fails one to trace the boundaries of the re-created Wessex any further. Very rightly, very thoroughly has the novelist *par excellence* of our day, appreciated all the nobleness and all the poetry that lies within the area of his chosen *mise en scène*. Not the least of the services which Mr. Thomas Hardy has rendered us, perhaps even to be prized more than his faithful portraying of rustic character, is his thus revivifying, and by consequence exciting the popular taste for and delight in so interesting a portion of our English homeland.

Nor let it be forgotten that his novels are not altogether fictitious, but are impregnated with authentic social and national history. There is truth enough in his works of fiction to make him a famous historian, omitting altogether what belongs to the proper region of romance.

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